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Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991): Letter to the Editor 06

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treatment. We're responsible, after all, for some of what happened to the Kurds.

ERNESTO BENITES
Fremont, Calif.

A Loaded Canon?

George Will's column "Literary Politics" (April 22) is the distorted sort of demagoguery that makes my hair stand on end. Will ridicules the Modern Language Association, which opposed Carol Iannone's nomination to the National Council on the Humanities, as "academic Marxists." Marxist criticism went out of fashion several decades ago. To suggest, as Will does, that teachers who favor canonizing more literature by minorities are greater enemies than Saddam Hussein is to inflame people against minorities and college instructors.

MARCIA S. CURTIS
Sunderland, Mass.

Will got it wrong about why the MLA is protesting Iannone's appointment to the National Council on the Humanities. The MLA opposed Iannone's nomination not because of her politics but because of her relatively undistinguished record of accomplishment in the humanities. The MLA believes, as I do, that representatives from across the political spectrum should be appointed to such government advisory councils, but that those appointed should bring with them a deserved eminence in their respective fields. (This is indeed a legal requirement for appointing NCH representatives.)

LIAM RECTOR, Executive Director
Associated Writing Programs
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Va.

Will's expertise on literary criticism dovetails neatly into his knowledge of baseball, politics, the fine art of fly-fishing and whatever else he knows everything about. His treatment of the MLA is nothing more than a ridiculous conservative flailing meant to keep patriarchal literary standards in place.

AMY ROBERTS-VANSKIKE
Iowa City, Iowa

Congratulations to George Will for lifting the curtain on the subversion of literature in the classroom. My son recently took a course called "Modern Fiction: 20th Century." The authors addressed included Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison and Kate Chopin. Not a word of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Dreiser, Lewis, Wolfe, Cather, Steinbeck, Wharton or Wouk. But Will doesn't go far enough. There should be a free market in all esthetic matters: no tax-

payer support of English departments in public universities and no National Endowment for the Arts to define implicitly what art and literature are with every grant it hands out.

TOM EAGAN
Louisville, Ky.

Just over a month ago, Will was shrilly proclaiming the '60s dead, dead, dead. Now he would have us believe those damn philistine campus "radicals"-cum-professors have determined the literary perceptions of future generations. What next?

FRED E. LESSIG
Lewes, Dela.

Will complains about those who say that all literature is political but then argues that literature is part of the transmission of a culture "that unites, even defines America," a culture "that is the nation's social cement." Will's real concern, it would seem, is that literature maintain, not critique, the status quo. The production, interpretation and teaching of literature are, of course, political acts, whether we admit it or not. Isn't it more honest to recognize and debate their political ramifications than to spuriously claim the high ground of apolitical objectivity and snipe at all those with whom we disagree?

ROBERT L. McLAUGHLIN
Normal, Ill.

How does Will propose we protect tomorrow's elite from the dangers of political pluralism on American campuses? Perhaps they should be trained in special academies staffed by politically sanitized instructors. There we'll teach them that Emily Dickinson wrote about peas and flower buds only because she loved gardening, and that "The Tempest" was no more than an early version of "Gilligan's Island"—though more worthy, of course, because it was written by one of the certified pillars of Western culture.

ANTHONY GUNEVRATNE
Bloomington, Ind.

Civilization is threatened by many things, George Will, but not by a conspiracy of critics. I never met two who could agree on any work long enough to conspire on a title for their MLA paper.

JUDITH L. BARNEY
Solana Beach, Calif.

The MLA is a huge organization. I presume it contains Marxists, though I've never met one. It also contains Republicans and Democrats, Baptists and Episcopa-

lians, even linguists and Thespians. Almost all of us work hard to acquaint young people with the written landmarks of our culture. But many think that adding works by minority and women writers to those of Shakespeare and Milton is simply admitting a part of our heritage that has been too long neglected. Being willing to do so smacks not of Marx but of the democratic ideals of Jefferson and Jackson!

RICHARD J. GIBSON
Jacksonville University
Jacksonville, Fla.

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